Killings-1931

Mississippi

MISSISSIPPI MOB KILLS NEGRO BABY

Daily Worker

LAUREL, Miss., Jan. 13.—The two year old baby of Hurt King, Jasper County Negro tenant farmer, was killed here last night in an attack by white farmers on the home of King.

King, his wife and several children were sitting in their flimsy cabin when a shotgun charge broke a window. The family flattened themselves on the floor to dodge the flying lead.

The baby, sleeping on the bed, was shot by a .32 caliber bullet that entered a window.

It is estimated that more than 50 revolver shots were fired, while 25 empty shotgun shells were found lying on the ground near the cabin.

Two white men were arrested charged with being members of the mob, but there islittle likelihood that they will ever be punished.

White Men Kill Assailant Of Colored Storekeeper

Journal and

GOODMAN, Miss.—White men answered the screams of Dan James, storekeeper, Monday night, tracked down his assailant, killed one and wounded another.

-31-31

James was wounded in the robbery attempt. He had won the praise of the community by capturing the slayer of a sheriff twenty years ago and in recent years for rescuing several white men marooned in a swamp by a flood.

NEGROES DENY GUILT IN AX MURDER TRIALS

Appeal

6-12-3

Accused Men at Water Valley to Fight Charges.

Memphis, Tenn

CASE TO OPEN THURSDAY

Plea of Not Guilty Surprises Court, After Confession Given. City Is Quiet, With Militiamen Gone Home.

BY G. O. ROBINSON, JR.
Commercial Appeal Staff Correspondent

WATER VALLEY, Miss., June 9 The state today began paving the legal highway over which it hopes to send two negroes to the gallows for the brutal ax slaying here May 4 of Will B. Wagner, 64, president of the Water Valley Bank, and his wife, Mamie, 60.

Indicted by a special Yalobusha County grand jury this morning on two counts of first degree murder, each, and then pleading not guilty through attorneys appointed by the court. Sam Whitaker, 18, and Emmett Shaw, 40, will face trial Thursday and Friday, respectively.

The indictments were returned separately and Whitaker will be the first to face the jury to be chosen from a special venire of 50 men approved by Circuit Judge Greek Rice of Charleston, after request of defense counsel.

Militiamen Leave.

Water Valley was quiet today. Absent were the 110 militiamen sent here to preserve order. Crowded, however, was the courtroom throughout the day. A cross section of the population of this and adjoining counties was present as the baby-faced Whitaker and the thin, weazley Shaw appeared before Judge Rice to hear the indictments read and then plead not guilty.

First to be called was Shaw, formerly employed by Mr. Wagner in his store here, one of the largest in the city. Walking in the courtroom between four deputies armed with pistols and special weapons, he then stood solemnly before the judge. Not 10 feet away was William Wagner, son of the slain couple, who arrived from his Honduras plantation a week after the murder and who has been here since.

Around the room stood special deputies of Sheriff C. T. Doyle, augmented by sheriffs and deputies of surrounding counties. They were asked by Sheriff Doyle to come here after he decided he could do without the militiamen.

Court Names Attorneys.

The reading of the first two indictments over, Whitaker was brought in. A slight grin ran over his face, his youthfulness was somewhat of a surprise to those in the crowd who had never seen the former houseboy of Mr. and Mrs. Wagner. He heard the charge and was taken out.

Judge Rice then appointed Jack Horan as counsel for Shaw, and Kermit Cofer as counsel for the younger negro. After conferring with the negroes, the lawyers, both of Water Valley, asked a special venire. The requested 400 was cut to 50 by Judge Rice, who then granted the petition.

Somewhat of a jolt to the audience was the plea of not guilty entered by Whitaker. Said by officers to have confessed killing the couple and later linked by his sister, Adelle Whitaker, in the slaying, it was believed that he would plead guilty. Recalcitrant, however, is Shaw, for he has never told officers, it is said, that he had anything to do with the murder.

The negroes were brought here this morning by Sheriff Doyle and deputies from Greenwood, where they have been confined all the while. Reports that they had once been spirited away from there after being carried from here the day after the crime proved a dub.

Two Prosecutors.

Memphis, Tenn

Milton Thompson of Senatobia, district attorney, is prosecuting the negroes, assisted by H. H. Creekmore as special counsel. Mr. Thompson read the charges this morning and then announced this afternoon that the grand jury had adjourned until Thursday without taking action on the criminal libel charge against Gerald Kelley, Memphis Press-Scimitar reporter, arrested on complaint of Sheriff Doyle following stories in his paper reporting the formation of a mob here.

It is not believed, however, that Kelley will be indicted. From all indications, it appears as if the jury may ignore the charge, though Sheriff Doyle, his dander still up because of the stories, stated emphatically this morning that he was going to push the case. Kelley is under $1,000 bond, signed by two Greenwood citizens after the charges were filed.

District Attorney Thompson requested Judge Rice to call this special session of court after the Whitaker negro was said to have confessed. It was Sheriff Doyle, aided by Sheriff Sam Coleman, of Leflore, who obtained the confession. He it was who asked Governor Bilbo to send national guardsmen here to take action in any emergency and then at the last moment decided he could handle the situation in his own way.

Actually, only 10 guardsmen of the 110 reported to be on their way here yesterday made their appearance on the streest last night. This morning, they had disappeared and if there has been any high feeling at all, it was kept smothered.

Mr. and Mrs. Wagner were murdered on the night of May 4. Their mutilated bodies were discovered the next morning.

The cook found Mr. Wagner's body when she went to work. An hour later Mrs. Wagner's body was found in a gully a mile from town, tossed from her own car by the slayers, who then placed the machine back in the Wagner garage and put the keys in a window of the structure.

When the cook made her discovery, Whitaker was calmly shooting a slingshot in the back yard. He helped spread the alarm. A few hours before, it appears from the testimony of his sister, he had forced her to aid him and Shaw in hiding the bodies. She told that story to the grand jury, according to District Attorney Thompson, and stated that she found them attempting to hide the bodies when she was sent by her mother to see what was detaining her brother.

Adelle, 18, the sister, will be sentenced after the trials are over. Maximum sentence of five years on the charge of accessory after the fact, will more than probably be meted out.

Motive for the murder of the prominent couple was said to be revenge. From what officers state, it appears as if Whitaker had been reprimanded by Mr. Wagner for not returning a gun he had borrowed. He slapped the negro. Shaw was linked in the slaying because of the fact that he had been fired by Mr. Wagner from his store several weeks before. He was arrested the morning after the slaying while working on the city streets.

ESCAPED KILLER SHOT BY PARCHMAN POSSE

Appeal

6-31-31

Officers Unharmed in Cotton Field Gun Battle.

Memphis, Tenn

FLED CAMP TUESDAY

Jesse Fabre, Hancock County, Was Serving Life Term for Murder of Two Government Officials Near Bay St. Louis.

Special to The Commercial Appeal.

PARCHMAN PRISON FARM PARCHMAN, Miss., July 30.—Cornered in a cotton field late today after having threatened numerous farmers with his rifle following his escape Tuesday night Jesse Fabre, 40, trusty-guard and life termer for the murder of two government officials near Bay St. Louis, engaged in a duel with a posse of prison officials and Sunflower County officers and tonight is in the Sunflower hospital with a bullet through his left breast.

The gun battle was the climax of an all-day search by the posse following appeals from citizens near Drew, some eight miles away, that Fabre had threatened them with a rifle from his hiding places in various sections of the woods nearby.

Bloodhounds Used.

Bloodhounds had been used yesterday when his escape was discovered but today officers took the trail alone and came upon the once well-behaved prisoner in a large cotton field. Refusing to drop his rifle and surrender, Fabre opened fire and the officers, with bullets singing past their heads, pourned a devastating fire at the desperado.

Possibly 20 bullets had been fired when Fabre suddenly collapsed.

C. H. Corley, sergeant in charge of Camp No. 6, with R. M. Wood, assistant sergeant at No. 1, and George Moore, assistant sergeant at No. 6, who were members of the posse, brought Fabre to the hospital, where his condition was declared very serious. The one bullet that struck him went in the left breast below the heart and emerged at the back.

It was revealed upon his capture that Fabre had upward of 100 rifle cartridges when he took French leave sometime Tuesday night. Other trusty guards, little suspecting that the quiet-mannered Fabre had ulterior motives, had loaned him some of their ammunition Tuesday, they reported today to Supt. Jim Williamson. Less than 75 cartridges were found on Fabre's person when he was shot down.

Fabre, sent up from Hancock County for one of the most atrocious crimes in the history of the state, had an exceptionally good record since entering prison and for his good conduct had been made a trusty-guard, and permitted to use a rifle. The system of using trusty-guards at the prison has frequently proved its merits, for the trusties always stand an excellent chance to have their sentence reduced, or for an outright pardon, if they halt a break.

Fabre, having the usual privilege of a trusty-guard, simply walked off the prison farm. His escape was not discovered until yesterday. His trail was lost at a negro cabin, where it was believed he got in a car.

ever, as newspaper men from all over the country flocked to the trial to report the proceedings and prepared, if need be, to install telegraph wires in the courtroom. Fabre, defended by Bidwell Adam, now lieutenant governor of the state of Mississippi, denied any participation in the actual killing and claimed that Jackson forced him to drive the truck of the slain men away from the scene. He likewise pleaded irresponsibility, claiming that he was mentally deficient, and testimony was introduced to the effect that his mind was that of a nine-year-old boy.

R. C. Cowan, district attorney of the Mississippi coast district, and Emile Gex, county prosecutor of Hancock County, vigorously prosecuted Fabre, who in his testimony in an effort to establish that he was a moron and said he did not know what a United States flag was and when shown one said he had never seen one before.

The jury found him guilty, but disagreed as to punishment and he was given a life sentence in the penitentiary.

KILLS MERIDIAN NEGRO.

MERIDIAN, Miss., July 30.—Detective T. [illegible] who was struck on the head with the butt of a gun by Cleo Blaylock, 25, negro, was compelled to shoot the negro, who died a few minutes later.

The officer was called to arrest a negro, said to be creating a disturbance. Mr. Harbour with Officer M. L. Dwyer, gained entrance to the house and were advancing on the negro who suddenly turned and hit Mr. Harbour over the head inflicting a severe wound.